

# THE COLONIAL NEWSLETTER

P.O.Box 2014

Little Rock, Arkansas

J. C. Spilman, Editor

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Volume 5, No. 1

August 1963

Serial No. 9

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## SALUTATORY

After a hiatus of more than one year, I am happy to introduce another issue of The Colonial Newsletter and a new Editor-Publisher. James Spilman has consented to take over the publication and is particularly qualified to impart new perspective and technical depth to it.

As the new manager, Jim will have the privilege of publishing some of the most factual articles and reports on Early American Numismatics that any specialized periodical has ever produced. These will be authored by some of the leading specialists and numismatic scholars of our time. The problems associated with the life and existence of this, as with any medium which serves special interests, are acute. Your continued SUPPORT in terms of data and articles is needed.

Alfred D. Hoch

With this issue The Colonial Newsletter enters a new era which includes a new format, a new editor, and hopefully the continuation of the fine service of the past to those interested in Colonial American Numismatics.

Our intent is to meet the objectives of Alfred D. Hoch, the founder, to "provide in permanent form an exchange of information, opinions, and discoveries concerning Early American coins and currency."

Future success is wholly dependent on the willingness of individuals to share their observations, opinions and comments with others of like interests.

The new format is one of necessity. Admittedly it is somewhat unconventional for a numismatic publication; however, we believe that with time the reader will come to appreciate both its flexibility and practicality.

Our objective is to publish a minimum of four issues each year; however, there is no firm publication schedule as this will depend entirely on the frequency and quantity of letters and articles from our readers. Any contribution, be it a distinguished dissertation or a single observation, will receive the serious attention of the editor.

As the interest in modern American Numismatics towers toward awesome heights, let us continue to strengthen the foundation. Though towers crumble, foundations remain.

James C. Spilman

## FOREIGN UNDERTYPES OF OVERSTRUCK COPPERS

Edward R. Barnsley  
Newtown, Pennsylvania

Detailed study of overstruck Early American coins has always been one of the special thrills enjoyed by collectors of this particular series. Crosby made many references to such phenomena. In speaking of the Vermont coinage, for example, he said, "The coins of this mint, and, in fact those of most, if not all, of the other State mints are frequently found struck upon other coins, - most commonly British halfpence, though frequently Nova Constellatio, or coins of some other State, producing curious combinations of letters without adding value to the specimens. Upon some of these, the legends and dates of both dies appear."

What is not generally known, however, is that Early American coins were occasionally struck over foreign pieces. The writer has two such examples in his cabinet; namely, a 1787 New Jersey copper, and a 1787 Connecticut copper. The former is a Maris 40-b struck over a regal French sous dated 1780. The latter is a Miller 33(20)-Z(9) struck over a Scotch bawbee, date not showing.

Before publishing these interesting specimens, the writer would like to gather information as to the whereabouts of other similar examples so that the article will be more complete. Any data that can be furnished on the subject will be deeply appreciated and properly acknowledged, for undoubtedly many other examples can be located if proper numismatic vigilance be exerted.

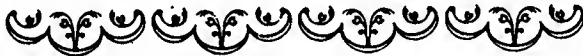
The complete answer to a query like this would be, of course, to set up some type of clearing house for the central filing of pertinent information on all undertypes of overstruck coins. And this very idea was actually suggested by the American Numismatic Society about twenty years ago, but as far as the writer can now determine, nothing constructive was accomplished at that time. Non-cooperation has been for too long the password of selfish collectors who want only to take rather than to give information.

Thomas Ollive Mabbott, a Fellow of the ANS and a member of its publishing committee, was also editor of the NUMISMATIC REVIEW. Dr. Mabbott had this to say concerning the proposed project in his issue dated December, 1943:

" According to a communication from Mr. Sidney P. Noe, an intensive study of the coinages of several of the States, during the period following the Revolutionary War, is being made under the auspices of the American Numismatic Society, with a view to the ultimate publication of the results. It is common knowledge that

many of these pieces used the flans of earlier issues, and a thorough study of such over-strikes has never been made. A collector who is interested in pieces in fine condition will have nothing to do with these over-strikes, for obvious reasons. Sometimes, however, the fact that the flan has been used a second time is not immediately apparent. This appeal, therefore, is directed to all interested in the colonial field, and is a request that they carefully examine their cents of New Jersey, Connecticut, New York, Vermont, Fugios, etc., and communicate their findings to the American Numismatic Society with an indication as to whether they would be willing to loan their specimens for a limited time for photographic or other recording. Only by making a cooperative effort can the necessary material and information be obtained. The aid of our readers is earnestly requested and we feel sure the undertaking is worth all efforts. "

QUESTION: Why can't this worthy project be reactivated ?



A friend and amateur collector reports the following conversation as having recently occurred between himself and a young graduate from Jersey's favorite college. We give it simply to show how silly those persons must be who pretend that our seven hundred and odd colleges do not, one and all, turn out profound and thorough classical scholars, or fail to give room, in their curriculum, to the subject of antiquities (local and modern):

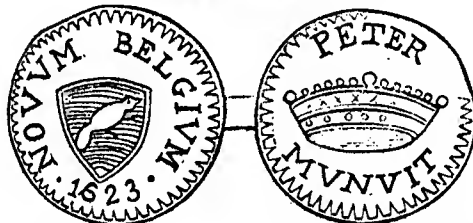
*Collector* (holding up a coin with a mule head profile, slyly). "Do now tell me the meaning of the inscription, Nova Cæsarea, on this coin." *Graduate* (authoritatively). "Nova; that is an adjective of the first and second declension, singular number, feminine gender and nominative case. That means "new." *Collector*. "Thank you; that is indeed new to me; let us now pass to the other word; Cæsarea means . . . what?" *Graduate* (scratching his proboscis). "Let me see . . . have you, perhaps, Anthon's Classical Dictionary? We might look it up." *Collector*. "Unfortunately I have not; but you ought to be a pretty good Latin scholar; can't you tell without a dictionary?" *Graduate*. "I'll tell you what I'll do; let me have the coin for a few days, and I'll look it up for you." The collector generously presents the coin to his young friend, who thereupon retires with the promise of an early report.

from THE COIN COLLECTOR'S JOURNAL

April 1876

The following is a reprint from the November 1877 issue of THE COIN COLLECTOR'S JOURNAL edited by Mr. Ed Frossard. This article describes some of the problems caused by one of the fabrications of C. Wyllys Betts. Perhaps this article will evoke some discussion from our readers regarding these pieces, quite a few of which are to be found in various collections.

#### The Last Discovery.



The illustration given above is one of a class of coins which have been common in all ages, and we suppose will continue to appear till the millennium, as they are usually conceived by cupidity, brought forth by lies, and adopted through ignorance. *Novum Belgium* is an exception to this rule only in the fact that it was made by a young man to pass away time, and sold at public auction as a fraud, so that no one could offer any excuse for being taken in by it, much less the editor of a numismatic paper, unless that the difficulty of acquiring the English language offers obstacles so insurmountable to the average foreigner as to prevent him from attaining a useful knowledge of it, or as he has lately shown himself incapable of even understanding such a classical (?) work as a coin sale catalogue, for we cannot suppose that any respectable person, much less one who devotes his life and talents to the education of the young, would knowingly descend to falsehood.

The coin of which we propose to give the history may be briefly described as follows:

*Obverse*, Beaver on shield, NOVVM BELGIVM, 1623.

*Reverse*, Crown, PETER MVNVIT.

It is the property of Capt. Defendorf, a well-known and highly esteemed collector of this city, who became possessed of it many years ago; having purchased it along with a lot of old coins, he has kept it from that day to this without ever attaching any importance to it. On looking over a lot of his coins, he thought he would try to find out something about it. He, accordingly, carried it with him to a coin sale, and asked the opinion of a few collectors concerning it. The general opinion was that it was a fraud, which was concurred in by the writer for reasons given below, and probably would have never been again noticed had it not been for the fact that a young editor had his acutely reasoning, historical and critical faculties terribly mixed by the bewildering anticipation of being the first to have "The honor of bringing out the coin to the notice of the American collectors and numismatists." (*Sic.*) Whatever this curiously constructed sentence may mean, it really is amusing to think how pathetically he must have pleaded with the owner for *all the credit*, and we certainly shall not be cruel enough to rob him of one particle of the renown which his excellent judgment and deep historic learning entitle him to receive from all well-informed numismatists.

Our reasons for not believing in the authority of the coin were :

1st. The style of engraving did not correspond with that of the period in which the coin as professed (by the date) was made.

2d. We know of no person connected with New Amsterdam of the name of Peter Minuit, and if it was intended for Peter Minnewit we think it quite probable he knew how to spell his own name, even if his English contemporaries preferred to call him Minuit or Minuits.

3d. We thought it scarcely probable that the then (1623) Governor of New Amsterdam, Jacobson May, would have coins struck with the name of one of his successors on them. These trifles, however (although he was not ignorant of them), were not allowed to bias the judgment of our critic.

4th. Mr. Cogan, a gentleman of excellent judgment, who has grown gray in the study of numismatics, said that he knew it to be false, and gave the name of the probable maker; we never allow our opinion to stand in the way of obtaining facts, when a few hours' investigation would settle the matter.

Again, regarding the manufacture of the coin, we will show how easy it is to get up a fraud that will deceive some people. A young gentleman (we do not give his name although it is an open secret), finding time hang heavily on his hands, amused himself by engraving dies in imitation of rare coins, afterward he branched out and designed some altogether fictitious, a list of which together with his counterfeits, we subjoin. His mode of work was simply to take two large U. S. cents, and file one side perfectly smooth, and then sitting at his desk dig out the designs with his penknife, an operation requiring great labor, but not more than has been accomplished by many schoolboys in cutting out the heads on pennies. After both sides were finished, he would take another cent, and file both sides smooth, and placing this between his dies, hammer it until he obtained a pretty fair impression, which our contemporary justly described as a "somewhat weak impress, especially in certain parts of the legends, but not to any extent abraded or circulated!"

List of fabrications by the same author sold at auction, 1864.

"NOTE.—Very many of the pieces here offered, are struck from excessively rare dies, recently engraved, all of which are destroyed; and every piece being the best in existence, it is the sincere wish of the owner that they meet with satisfaction."

1.—N. E. Sixpence (not Wyatt't); silver, unique.

2.—Pine Tree Shilling, 1653. "Massachusetts in." "New England, Anno. 1653, XII;" silver, very fine, unique.

3.—Connecticut Shilling. *Obv.*: grape vine, "Connecticut in." *Rev.*: "New England, An. Do. 1662, XII." Struck over an unique N. E. Shilling (not Wyatt's); silver, very fine, excessively rare, and in respect to the N. E. Shilling, unique.

4.—Lord Baltimore Shilling; silver, very fine, unique.

- 5.—Lord Baltimore Sixpence; silver, very good, unique.
  - 6.—Lord Baltimore Penny. Engraved, unique.
  - 7.—*Obv.*: Goddess of Liberty facing left. "Colony of." *Rev.*: bust in armor facing right. "New Yorke;" excessively rare in lead. This specimen is in silver, and unique.
  - 8.—New York Piece. *Obv.*: Beaver on Shield (old coat-of-arms of New York under the Dutch government), "Novum Belgium, 1623." *Rev.*: Crown "Peter Masuit" (first Gov.); lead.
  - 9.—Rhode Island Piece. *Obv.*: "Rhodia Orsula, 1779." *Rev.*: "Nova Britannia, 1." Copper, very fine, excessively rare.
  - 10.—Annapolis Sixpence, 1783; silver, very fine, unique.
  - 11.—Auctori Plebis, 1785; very fine, unique.
  - 12.—"Nova Constellatio." *Rev.*: "Immune Columbia, 1785." *Obv.*: "Genuine." Very fine, unique.
  - 13.—"Immunis Columbia, 1786." *Rev.*: Shield "E Pluribus Unum." *Rev.*: Genuine; good, unique.
  - 14.—"Non vi virtute vici, 1786;" fine, unique.
  - 15.—"Nova Eborae." *Rev.*: "Immune Columbia, 1786;" very fine, excessively rare.
  - 16.—"George III. Rex." *Rev.*: "Immune Columbia, 1785;" very fine. *Obv.*: Genuine; excessively rare.  
(All the dies of "Immune Columbia" are different.)
  - 17.—New Hampshire Cent. *Obv.*: Bust in armor, facing right, "Nova Hamps." *Rev.*: Figure of Liberty, seated facing right; "Libertas, 1787;" very fine; two struck.
  - 18.—"Liber Natus Libertatem Defenda," Indian standing. *Rev.*: coat-of-arms of N. Y., "1787, Excelsior;" very fine, unique.
  - 19.—*Obv.*: The same, Indian standing. *Rev.*: coat-of-arms of N. Y., "1787, Excelsior;" very fine, unique.
  - 20.—"Non vi virtute vici." *Rev.*: Eagle, "Nev Eberacus, 1787, Excelsior;" fine, unique.
  - 21.—Washington medal. *Obv.*: Bust to right. "Washington." *Rev.*: Five-pointed star, "Commander of the Armie of Virginia;" copper, very fine; very slightly double struck; unique.
  - 22.—Washington medal. *Obv.*: Two ships sailing, "George Washington." *Rev.*: "Payable to John Kerdrig. T. O. O. E. W. T. T. W. N." Silver, very fine, unique.
- Such a piece has known to have been issued in 1794, but no original is in existence.

N.B.—It will be noticed that the Novum Belgium, bought by Mr. Nixon for 40 cents at this anction sale was lead. It will also be noticed that in the description Peter Masuit (evidently a printer's error) is described as the first governor. This mistake in regard to Minnewit being the first governor, evidently led the author to put the date of the first governor on the coin. May similar historical attainments always go hand in hand with "the utmost mechanical skill, (which) presided at its birth in a modern *attelier (sic) de faussaire.*"



## RESEARCH FORUM

Two of the major roadblocks to researchers in the field of Colonial Numismatics are the difficulties associated with identification of original sources of data and obtaining details regarding scarce specimens. Progress is often made, at best, in a frustratingly slow and unsatisfactory manner.

The purpose of Research Forum, which will become a regular feature of The Colonial Newsletter, is to present the research problems of our readers in the hope of eliciting the desired information from the personal notes or cabinets of other researchers or collectors.

As requests are received they will be assigned an identification number and published. Replies will be compiled by the editor and summarized or published in full as seems appropriate.

In some cases our readers may desire to communicate directly for a more detailed interchange of ideas than could be handled conveniently through this column. In such cases, and where this is mutually acceptable, the parties will be privately identified to each other by the editor. Unless specifically requested, the names of contributors to Research Forum will not be published.

Our initial group of inquiries is as follows:

- RF-1 Has anyone seen the Mott token with lettered edge?
- RF-2 What is the source of the name "Juan Bermudez" ascribed to a ship's captain, or of a ship named "Bermudas" ? They have long been found in the Guide Book. Where did its compilers get either name ?
- RF-3 Several years ago The Bank of New York published a pamphlet discussing the terminal history of the Fugio Cents. Who did the research for this pamphlet and what were the sources of the information ?
- RF-4 What edge is on the silver "Kentucky" token ?
- RF-5 How many collectors have specimens of varieties 1-A, 2-B, 3-C and 6-F of the tin farthings of 1688 reading " 1/24 Part Real " ?
- RF-6 Crosby Fugio obverse # 4 (rays of the glory extending into the thirteen rings) is reported in gold, silver and copper (electro). Can these specimens, or photographs, be made available for examination ?